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Photo : Hung. Nat. Mus. — S. Ébner

The young woman with her baby goes to be «churched»

p 11 [p 12 is blank]

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584 he may visit with «serious» intentions. Whether he likes her or not, — he may marry only that girl whom his parents like! If the boy disapproves of his parents' taste he can declare that he will not marry just yet, thereby merely expressing the hope that perhaps in the meantime the girl in question will be tied to some other person with the «heavenly» bonds...

[581] Beauty does not count, the financial situation alone is of any importance. If the girl is ugly, which is fairly rare amongst the good looking Matyós, there is the standing formula of consolation: — «Look at her my son, she has a great patch on her skirt!» — The great patch means a great strip of land...

When the boy has been persuaded and has given in, a woman is sent to the girl's family as an emissary to take soundings... If the thing is all right, the boy presents himself in the evening. — «Well, did you think of something?» — he asks the girl in the courtyard. — «My mother knows all about it», — is her answer. — «Well, godmother, will you let your daughter marry me?» — is [576] the question he asks the mother: as Matyó lads call every woman «godmother», whether they know her or not, unless she is a relation or a neighbour.

• [292] The girl gives her young man an «engagement apron». Its colour is black and its bottom is embroidered with glorious bright embroidery: it is a masterpiece of Hungarian art! Otherwise it is forbidden to show affection either then, or during the whole time of marriage: in Matyó eyes that is a great disgrace even in the fortunate case where the young people actually happen to be in love with each other. The betrothed also gets a shirt, another masterpiece of the Matyó art of embroidering; done with red and blue threads. On an agreed date the young man is dressed in his engagement shirt and apron. About mid-

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SUNDAY MORNING

Photo R. Balogh

[facing p 10]

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291 back of the *szűr* and seems to aim at no other than deco-
531 rative effect; in reality, this mobile collar may be reversed to guard its wearer from the biting north-western wind blowing down the *puszta* from the Carpathians. To guard his trousers against soiling and wear, the Hungarian
• [292] farmer wears an apron of waterproof oilcloth. In some regions a Sunday apron of fine material, richly embroidered at the hem has developed from the protective apron of working-days: for instance, in the Matyó region, where the holiday apron is presented to the boys as a token of love like the engagement kerchief in other districts. Examples similar to this could be cited by the score from the shepherd's overcoat to the peculiarly shaped heavy undergarment of the Hungarian women of Transylvania, which, at some time in the distant past, has served to guard the women-folk of this coveted region against the enforced attentions of the raiding Eastern invaders.

As a general rule it might be said that the man's costume in Hungary varies according to the geographic characteristics of a given region, and the occupation of the wearer. The style of the decoration bears the stamp which is peculiar to that region, and it tends to blend with the functional considerations determined by the various occupations. The elements that have been filtering in from other regions or from foreign countries, and those which have been taken over from the gala of the gentry, or more recently, from the townsfolk, by way of imitation, become with the flow of time assimilated or eliminated altogether.

292 We have noted that in the dress of the womenfolk
531 the more subtle considerations often vie successfully with the regular or the utilitarian. The high boots of the marriageable girls and the young married women are

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made of red leather instead of the usual black, and between the inner and outer soles of these high boots, a creaking, squeaking piece of leather is placed so that its sound attracts the attention of everyone within hearing-distance. The slippers made of red leather or of felt in a variety of colours are richly embroidered. The heavy woollen stockings also come in a variety of colours, some plain, some embroidered in contrasting colours; in others in turn rings of various colours form the pattern of the weft. The headgear of the newly-married women is different in practically every village. These little bonnets of fanciful shapes are richly coloured with embroidery or lace, sometimes with both, and there are instances where the lace itself is embroidered to make the effect more singular, more striking. The hips are often filled up with horse-hair or cotton, sometimes a form of felt is attached to accentuate the outlines of the body, and the purpose of more than a dozen petticoats is to lend the skirts that ballooning sway, the rhythm of which does not fail to catch the eye of the man, to appeal to his imagination and to arouse his desire. All this, as we have already said, has for function the attraction and the captivation of the male.

It is the privilege of youth to please and to use all the admitted weapons in its armoury of love. In the simple black kerchief or bonnet of the elderly womenfolk the functional elements returns. These bonnets fulfil their original purpose; they hold the hair in place and protect the head of the wearer. With age, the embroideries, laces, ribbons and the like, as well as colour, gradually give way to the enveloping uniformity of a sobre simplicity.

It is the undergarments that preserve for the longest time the traces of their origin and their functional

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796 huge chalk letters "G. B. M.", in commemoration of the Magi; Gaspar, Balthasar, and Melchior. They are received and duly rewarded with food and small gifts by the villagers.

According to popular belief based on experience, winter ends about the twentieth of January. On this day, which is that of St Fabian and St Sebastian, the sap begins to rise in the trees, and on St Paul's Day the winter cold is supposed to break.

The events which mark the rebirth of nature become more and more numerous. The second of February is the day of the Happy Virgin Blesser of Candles, upon which, as the name implies, the blessing of the candles takes place. In an unusual ceremony on St Blaise's Day and on Schoolday (February 3rd and 10th) the twigs to be used for grafting are cut out while the children of the village masquerade in the streets as the soldiers of St Blaise, Patron Saint of school-children. In chanted poems they reclaim would-be truants for the alphabet, and for their efforts the villagers reward them with food and sweets. On Shrove Tuesday poppy-seed is sown, vegetables are planted, and the maize for the spring sowing is plucked from the cob. This is a long day both of work and of merry-making, in which every member of the family, the neighbours, and the farm-hands share equally. To make a heavy and tiresome task easier, jokes are told and merry songs are sung for the last time on this closing day of Carnival.

796 292 At the sound of the bells at midnight, the merriment suddenly ends, the gypsies silence their instruments, and everyone returns to his home. On Ash Wednesday the period of Lent begins, which finds its outward expression not only in the complete cessation of dances and games, but also in the fact that the merrily coloured

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796 [292] embroidered skirts of the womenfolk are exchanged for the sombre dark or brown, and the vivid bows in the girls' hair yield to the tempered shades of green and blue. This is also the day of farewell to winter. The season of rain and cold, personified by a trunk or a log, is banished from the village and is burned in the fields or drowned in the village pond.

The eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth of March are the days of St Alexander, St Josephus and St Benedict; they are the popular harbingers of spring who never come without "bagfuls" of summer warmth.

The twenty-fifth of March is the day of the Happy Virgin Grafter of Fruit-trees. The boughs cut on St Blaise's Day are grafted on this day, and the occasion is duly celebrated.

Shortly after, the herds are driven out to the pasture-lands, and even today this is connected in some places with quaint, superstitious practices. Across the gate of the courtyard an iron chain is spread, to "ensure" that the animals will remain welded to the herd as though secured by a chain. On the board bridging the ditch over which the cattle have to pass, an egg is placed so that the animals shall fatten as full and round as the egg. Elsewhere the herd is driven across the embers of birch faggots to purge it of all impurities.

On Palm Sunday colourful religious processions celebrate the Saviour's triumphal entry. In memory of this event pussy willow, gathered by the children the day before, is blessed and taken home, where it will be carefully preserved in the "Holy Corner" of the house until next spring. Perhaps it is even more important that the long, lean days of Lent have at last come to an end. Singing, dancing, and embroidered costumes are restored to their rights, and the straw

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PIETA

Photo Magyar Filmiroda

[facing p. 82]